

BATTY MAN

Paul Blake's *Batty Man* was one of the highlights of the 2007 Education season on Gay Teen Sexuality. The BAFTA-nominated film followed black gay stand-up comedian Stephen K Amos on his personal journey from the housing estate where he grew up in London to his family home in Jamaica, to explore the widespread homophobia within the African-Caribbean community.

Paul Blake's previous credits include *Giving up the Weed*, an RTS award-winning documentary which followed urban musician J Rock as he sought to rid himself of his addiction to marijuana, and *Sticks and Stones* in which So Solid Crew rapper Ashley Walters looked at whether the use of the "n-word" by young, cool opinion-formers in the black community encourages an easy acceptance of racism and racist language.

His company, Maroon Productions, has a ten-year relationship with Channel 4. He says: "I have found that Channel 4, of all the major terrestrial broadcasters, is the channel most willing to listen to voices and viewpoints from diverse communities and individuals like myself. It has allowed me to make powerful films that not only speak to my community but also to the wider UK population".

Paul Blake's next project, for Channel 4 Education, will be a cross-platform initiative for late 2008, *The Blackwoods – In Stereo*. This animation series will offer a sharply observed commentary on teen life as it follows main character Tony Blackwood and the exploits of his family and friends.

SORIOUS SAMURA

Sierra Leonean film-maker Sorious Samura's documentaries are respected internationally for their journalistic quality and their distinctively personal view of highly emotive social and political issues. Channel 4 has supported him over many years, and has commissioned many of his most acclaimed films. His debut film, *Cry Freetown/Out of Africa*, co-funded by Channel 4, exposed the atrocities committed during the civil war in his home country of Sierra Leone. Samura described "a nation being murdered and left to die by the so-called developed Western world". In 2002, he exposed sexual abuse of refugees in Guinea by UN aid workers, a film (shown on Channel 4) which contributed to the implementation of a new code of conduct explicitly prohibiting sexual exploitation.

His most powerful work to date has been a series of extraordinary films for Channel 4's *Dispatches*, made by living alongside the people whose stories he was telling. In *Living with Hunger*, Samura spent a month in a remote Ethiopian village, sharing the meagre diet of its inhabitants. *Living with Refugees* documented the grim experience of Darfur's refugees on the Sudan-Chad border. *Living with Aids* saw him living with a Zambian family affected by HIV/AIDS. And in *Living with Illegals*, he followed African illegal immigrants journeying from Morocco to the UK. Most recently, a *Dispatches* film on *How to Get Ahead in Africa* painted a devastating picture of corruption in Kenya.

Sorious Samura's films have won many awards including a BAFTA and two Emmys. He was the One World Media Broadcast Journalist of the Year in 2006.

THE SEVEN SINS OF ENGLAND

After 10 years in the United States, writer-director Joseph Bullman returned to England to find its streets seemingly engulfed by a tide of beer, sick and blood. He devised a programme which would, rather than taking an “England’s-going-to-the-dogs” approach, show the English to have been binge-drinking hooligans for the last thousand years. He wanted real-life hoodies, binge-drinkers and chavs to deliver the authentic words of 11th-century binge-drinkers, Edwardian yobs, Elizabethan xenophobes and 17th-century hooligans.

A deeply original idea, it also carried risks. There was no road-map for this kind of film. But shot in Bullman’s home town of Romford, it had the potential to give audiences a new perspective on what had become so much a part of our lives that we no longer see it.

In the event, *The Seven Sins of England* proved to be a defining and groundbreaking film. Defying prevailing myths about antisocial behaviour, it gave a voice to an often-ignored section of the audience – the white working class. Reviews described it as “Shakespearian”, “terrifying”, “hilarious”, “Hogarthian”, “dislocating”, “inspired” and “brilliantly imaginative”. The Times said that “Originality is so rare on television that I could barely believe what was playing out before my eyes.” Bullman says he does not believe any other broadcaster would have commissioned this film. *The Seven Sins of England* was made by Halcyon Productions.

FONEJACKER

Channel 4’s annual *Comedy Lab* season has unearthed much new comedy talent, including Peter Kay, Ricky Gervais, Mitchell & Webb, Dom Joly and Russell Brand. One recent entry was a showreel from unknown performer Kayvan Novak and new director Ed Tracy, which involved an idea based around a phone call. Seeing potential, Channel 4 teamed them up with Hat Trick to produce a pilot. Following its success in 2006, a full series was commissioned for E4.

Fonejacker’s original execution stands out from other TV comedy. Through improvisation, Kayvan Novak brings to life a vast range of character creations. The show’s creative challenge included finding a visual grammar that matched and embellished the characters and jokes. This resulted in a visual style that took in varied approaches, including pure animation, still manipulation and filmed videotape inserts.

Legal issues around contributor consent proved to be one of the greatest challenges that the concept faced. Channel 4’s legal department, whose expertise has in the past supported controversial and risk-taking shows such as *Brass Eye* and *The 11 O’Clock Show*, worked hard within the regulatory constraints to ensure the programme-makers were able to realise their creative ambitions.

Fonejacker has gone on to become E4’s biggest ever comedy show. It recently won Best New TV programme at the Broadcast Awards and has been nominated for Best New Comedy Entertainment Show at the British Comedy Awards, in addition to being nominated as Best Digital Programme for this year’s RTS awards and short-listed as a nominee for Best comedy at the Rose D’Or awards.

Channel 4 remit: exhibiting a distinctive character

DISPATCHES SPECIAL: CHINA'S STOLEN CHILDREN

This *Dispatches* film examined the side effects of the One Child policy in China, where an estimated 70,000 children are kidnapped every year and traded on the black market.

In the run up to the Beijing Olympics, Truevision (makers of *The Dying Rooms* for Channel 4 a decade earlier), and Channel 4's News and Current Affairs commissioning team, decided to investigate individual stories of missing and stolen children. The project was undertaken without help from the Chinese authorities, who were criticised by some families whose children had been stolen.

Over seven months, a small team met with and filmed families in China, whilst avoiding the authorities who, it was felt, did not want this story told. Extraordinary access to those involved included devastated parents searching for their stolen son, the deal-broker who even sold his own offspring, and prospective parents contemplating giving up their soon-to-be-born daughter. The film uncovered baby girls being sold for just £200, detectives specialised in finding kidnapped children, and child traffickers so relaxed they allowed filming of the buying and selling.

Originally planned as an hour-long programme, such was its power and importance that Channel 4 decided to extend it to 90 minutes, showing it in primetime and promoting it on billboards.

The film was praised by critics, and gained a very respectable 1.5 million audience. Co-producer HBO showed it in cinemas in the United States, where it was long-listed for this year's Oscars.

CITY OF VICE

City of Vice is a series of police detective dramas set in eighteenth century London, when the novelist and magistrate Henry Fielding was establishing the Bow Street Runners as Britain's first police force.

Sophisticated graphics and an animated map of London help provide context and historical background. The plots are fictional, but the series is rooted in detailed primary research into real individuals and circumstances of the time, making this a distinctive hybrid of drama-documentary and fully realised period drama.

Series producer Rob Pursey, of Touchpaper TV, says: "Henry Fielding is more generally known as the author of *Tom Jones*, but his legacy is far greater than that. *City of Vice* brings to life the kinds of cases he and the Bow Street Runners regularly encountered. Viewers may be shocked at the behaviour of our Georgian ancestors, but vice on the streets of London is by no means a new phenomenon."

The series has a well-developed cross-platform dimension, with online information about life in the Georgian period, and links to other relevant Channel 4 programmes and strands, such as *Time Team* and *The Worst Jobs in History*. A "Bow Street Runner" online adventure game, developed for Channel 4 Education by digital production agency Littleloud, uses characters and settings from the series, with players as "runners", gathering evidence to solve crimes in Georgian London.

The series is produced by Touchpaper TV and Hardy & Sons.

EMBARRASSING ILLNESSES

Embarrassing Illnesses typifies the history of much of Channel 4's output. Dismissed in advance as sensationalist, cheap and sick, when it was broadcast the series was widely acknowledged to be a serious, brave and important piece of public service television. More importantly, many viewers contacted Channel 4 to express their appreciation in moving and highly personal terms.

Embarrassing Illnesses tackled some of the most sensitive health taboos – piles, webbed feet, testicular cancer, hairy backs, third nipples, breast cancer and prolapsed vaginas – and did it in prime time in a series presented by three GPs, none of whom had appeared on television before. Created by Birmingham-based independent producer Maverick TV, the programmes offered candid information and advice, with viewers even able to make appointments to attend a clinic.

A particularly popular element of the series was *Street Strands*, in which the presenters met individuals at risk of contracting the featured illnesses. A professional rugby team demonstrated testicular cancer checks, and Birmingham University's women's hockey team bared all for breast cancer awareness. Serious health concerns such as bowel cancer and chlamydia were similarly tackled in an open and unembarrassed way. One viewer called Channel 4 to say that as a result of the programmes she had discovered that she had an early stage breast cancer. Another called to say that early detection of cancer, prompted by the programme, had saved her son's testicle.

The series was watched by an average of 2.5 million people, with a particularly high proportion of young viewers.

MEET THE NATIVES

"If TV manages to broadcast anything as simultaneously thought-provoking and charming this year, I'll be dumbstruck" (Charlie Brooker, Guardian)

The idea for *Meet The Natives* was simplicity itself – instead of Anglocentric anthropologists making a film about a distant island race in the South Pacific, what sort of film would anthropologists of the Pacific make about a distant island race in the North Sea?

The islanders of Tanna, part of Vanuatu, obliged. Their particular interest in the island of Britain was Prince Philip, who they believe to be a living God. In the course of their quest to meet the Prince, the Vanuatans also encountered the three "tribes" of Britain – the upper, middle, and working classes, exposing their eccentricities and their often child-like irresponsibilities.

The filmmakers – in particular, narrator Jimmy Joseph Nakou – brought to the project a warmth and generosity of spirit. Nevertheless, the damaging eating habits of the natives, their laughable preoccupation with money at the expense of friendship, their inexplicable compulsion to throw things away with no thought for their environment, and bizarre practices such as shampooing their pet dogs all came under the sharp eye of the Pacific anthropologists.

Meet The Natives is made by Keo Films. It was named Best Documentary Series at the recent Broadcast Awards.

A catalyst for creativity

4TALENT

4Talent supports creative talent throughout their careers, through a raft of formal and informal learning and development initiatives, embracing work experience and summer school placements for new entrants, through to researcher development programmes and series producer schemes. Supported by Channel 4's education, commissioning, design, marketing and HR teams, the scope of 4Talent's activity reflects Channel 4's commitments across TV, film, new media and radio.

4Talent Networks, our online resource, has a team of editors and producers based around the UK – in London, the West Midlands, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These "hubs" work with regionally-based creative organisations, funding agencies and independent producers to support local talent through workshops, masterclasses, showcasing events and networking opportunities.

As well as a host of real-world training and work experience schemes, 4Talent Networks offers insights from presenters and production staff, writers and developers, industry commentators, and commissioners. These activities are also linked to major Channel 4 on-air strands and online services such as *3 Minute Wonders*, *First Cut*, *4Laughs* and *FourDocs*.

Beneficiaries of 4Talent schemes include Zac Beattie who, first funded as a researcher on the Channel 4-supported ft2 scheme, got his first break with his film *Dead Body Squad for Cutting Edge*. Similarly, Sasha Maja Djurkovic, already a festival circuit award-winner, was commissioned to make several short films for *3 Minute Wonders*, Channel 4's primetime slot for new directors. Djurkovic has gone on to become a director for a BBC series.

THE BIG ART PROJECT

The Big Art Project gives individuals and communities the opportunity to commission major works of art from some of the most prominent international artists of today. This is not simply a television programme about the arts (although a four-part series to be broadcast later in 2008 is a central part of the project). It is in itself a significant contribution to contemporary arts practice, developed in partnership with Arts Council England, the Art Fund and a host of local, regional and European bodies.

In response to on-air promotions, members of the public suggested locations and themes for works of art that would bring pleasure and benefit to their community. From 1,500 proposals an expert panel chose six projects in different parts of the UK, each of which was developed by local groups working with a curator.

As well as the documentary series, created for Channel 4 by production company Carbon Princess, *The Big Art Project* includes an award-winning website; a mobile (WAP) website, a striking piece of commissioned art in front of Channel 4's headquarters (the Big 4) and, most importantly, six major new works in outdoor public locations.

Every aspect of the project has been ground-breaking. Members of the public were invited to send photos of public art works, buildings and open space from their mobile phones to be added to an online Big Art Map of the UK, with further information and commentary being constantly added by other users. The resulting "Big Art Mob" went on to win an RTS Innovation Award.

Risk-taking drama

SHAMELESS

Shameless was initially a single film written by Paul Abbott about his childhood, a gritty and hard-hitting drama about a child in a dysfunctional family. Loving the characters, Channel 4 and producer George Faber persuaded Paul Abbott to create a series, the tone becoming more comedic and less overtly autobiographical. Development, from initial script to transmission, took seven years.

Originality and truthfulness were at the heart of the show – a new way of approaching such a dark and difficult world, it was difficult to get right. The show took risks with the outspoken and outrageous lead character Frank Gallagher: despite obvious shortcomings, he had to be entertaining and lovable. After a few days' filming, the character was recast to ensure his tone was as intended.

The first series won a healthy audience of 2.5 million, which has since grown to over nearly 4 million each week, covering all transmissions across Channel 4 and E4. Increasing familiarity with the characters has developed a core fanbase, enjoying the irreverence and wit absent in much other British drama. Despite being a dysfunctional family trying to get by in difficult circumstances, the Gallaghers also love and support each other, and have fun together. Its original take on a familiar world brings unexpected joy and surprise to a side of life normally depicted as depressing and hopeless.

Shameless has given many new writers and directors the training and experience needed to develop their careers in television drama.

Shameless is made by Company Pictures.

LONGFORD

Channel 4's drama commissions have always focused on original writing about contemporary Britain. Described by its writer, Peter Morgan, as the story of a love affair between the two most hated people in Britain, *Longford* offered a new perspective on the notorious Moors murderers and, in particular, on the complicated relationship built up over several decades between Myra Hindley and her most famous prison visitor, the Earl of Longford.

Was Hindley a manipulative monster? Was Longford a gullible fool? The film gave no easy answers but explored some of the wider themes which the Moors murder case threw up – the extent to which society is or is not prepared to balance the desire for vengeance with a belief in rehabilitation; the effectiveness of prison; and the extent to which redemption is possible for such profoundly flawed human beings as Ian Brady and Myra Hindley. And it highlighted issues that remain very much alive today, including our collective response to crimes such as paedophilia and serial murder which are beyond the comprehension of most people.

The film brought together an extraordinary swathe of Britain's most creative talent, from the writing of Peter Morgan to the performances of a cast which included Jim Broadbent, Samantha Morton and Lindsay Duncan.

Made for Channel 4 by Granada Productions in association with HBO, *Longford* won a host of national and international awards, including three Golden Globes and two BAFTAs

Compelling entertainment

BIG BROTHER

One of Channel 4's most distinctive, influential and iconic programmes, *Big Brother* pioneered reality television, and is emblematic of the cutting-edge entertainment shows that have cemented Channel 4's reputation, especially with younger audiences.

Audience research shows that many people see it as the single most dramatic innovation in British television over the last decade. It introduced not just reality television, but a new way of telling stories. Its impact has been felt across many genres. It has consistently innovated, in terms of format, spin-off programming and exploiting digital technologies, for example through 24-hour streaming on digital TV and mobile phones. Yet when launched in 2000, *Big Brother* was a huge creative – and commercial – risk.

Possibly more than any other British television programme, *Big Brother* polarises opinion. For some, it represents everything that's worst about modern Britain, but for others it reveals ordinary human relationships and provides welcome evidence of the tolerance, open-mindedness and diversity of British society. Series 2 winner Brian Dowling joined *SMTV Live*, becoming the first openly gay children's television presenter. Other winners included transsexual Nadia Almada; Tourette's sufferer Pete Bennett; and Nigerian-born Brian Belo.

Big Brother is ultimately an engaging entertainment format. Like other long-running programmes, it has habitual highs and lows as it constantly reinvents itself – particular lessons had to be learnt following 2007's *Celebrity Big Brother*. But as its ninth series approaches, it remains extremely popular, watched, loved and discussed by millions: as much a part of the British summer as wet bank holidays.

Big Brother is an Endemol UK production.

RAMSAY'S KITCHEN NIGHTMARES

Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares taps into a growing trend in Britain, where increasing numbers of passionate amateur "foodies" think they can turn their hobbies into successful restaurants – often with disastrous consequences – which is where Gordon comes in.

He combines Michelin-starred excellence with a ferocious passion, heavily criticising incompetence, laziness and sloppiness, yet he can be charm itself when dealing with any personal problems suffered by the restaurateurs, or he senses the involvement of anybody with genuine talent – from the head chef to the kitchen porter.

Combining popular factual sensibilities with documentary depth, *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* manages to be continually surprising and inventive. Going from strength to strength across four series, the programme's audience regularly exceeds 4 million viewers. It is highly respected amongst viewers, TV critics, chefs and others working in the food industry – evidence of the latter provided by its Observer food award.

The perfect features programme, *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* combines compelling and entertaining documentary narratives with real take out information – it is also arguably Channel 4's most successful business programme. And as a by-product, it turned Gordon Ramsay into one of the most loved and popular chefs in the country.

Made by Optomen Productions, *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* has won an international Emmy, plus awards from BAFTA, Grierson and Broadcast.

A different approach to the arts

BALLET CHANGED MY LIFE: BALLET HOO!

Following the success of reality arts series *Operatunity* and *Musicality*, *Ballet Changed My Life* was conceived with a very different aim – to see if the precise and specialist artform of ballet could have any broader social purpose. The project was also inspired by Channel 4's recent commitment to public engagement with the high arts.

The series followed a group of young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and gave them the opportunity to train with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, with the best of them to be given real parts in a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. This ballet was chosen because it has parts for a wide age range, and roles requiring a range of skills – making it accessible to young people new to ballet, while also providing a showcase for brilliant new professional talents from the ballet world.

The series was a collaboration between Youth at Risk (a charity specialising in helping disadvantaged young people), Birmingham Royal Ballet, local councils in Birmingham and Dudley and the Arts Council of England. It was created and produced by Roy Ackerman and Michael Waldman of Diverse. The lives of the young people who participated in the project were utterly transformed by the experience. They were able to find work, go back to college and reunite with their families. Many of them were unable to speak with confidence before the series; by the end, they were on public platforms addressing audiences about their experience.

The project was also profoundly changing for Birmingham Royal Ballet, bringing an entirely new audience to the theatre and the ballet.

PETER AND THE WOLF

Prior to this production, Suzie Templeton had made two award-winning three-minute animation films at home on her kitchen table. In line with its commitment to developing unique new talent, Channel 4 met with her to discuss her next project, and she named Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* as a classic piece that she was keen to treat in a new way. Templeton was keen to digress from the usual treatment of *Peter and the Wolf* as a cartoon, not least because the composer's original intentions were more profound. Channel 4 commissioned the development which enabled Suzie to produce drawings and animatics.

Channel 4 also supported producer Hugh Welchman, again fresh out of film school, helping him put the finance plan and business deals together and to raise the £1.2 million budget, and committing an initial investment of £300,000. Channel 4 was also heavily involved during production, both editorially and in the financial planning.

The film was premiered at the Royal Albert Hall, with a live orchestral accompaniment. The film has toured extensively as a concert event, as well as being broadcast throughout the world. It has been nominated for major international awards, and recently won an Oscar (Best Animation Short) and the Rose d'Or.

Channel 4 has a 25 year reputation as the home of British animation, producing over 30 short films a year. It is a mark of the channel's ability to support young talent that Suzie was able to move so quickly from short films to delivering a 40 minute film of this scale.

Film4: Oscar winners

MARTIN MCDONAGH

Renowned playwright Martin McDonagh (*The Lieutenant of Inishmore, The Pillowman*) made the move from theatre to film with short film *Six Shooter*. Film4 green-lit the production within 24 hours of receiving his script, a black comedy featuring a psychopathic protagonist and an exploding cow. After attracting additional support from the Irish Film Board, McDonagh went on to direct the film, shooting in the Irish town of Wicklow.

The New York Times called the resulting film “eloquent and comic, shaped by a sophisticated cinematic imagination”. It was nominated for a slew of short film awards, and won Best Live Action Short at the Academy Awards in 2006.

A year later, McDonagh sent Film4 the script for a feature film, *In Bruges*. With the writing again exceptional and the relationship already established, acceptance was again swift, and Graham Broadbent was recruited as producer. Following a bidding war amongst the US studios, Focus Features emerged as a partner for Film4.

Starring Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson and Ralph Fiennes, *In Bruges* tells the story of two hapless hitmen, sent to Bruges to cool their heels after a job in London goes wrong.

It opened the Sundance Film Festival in January to highly positive reviews, and is scheduled to open in UK cinemas this spring.

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

Film4 worked for over seven years with producers Lisa Bryer and Charles Steel (Cowboy Films) and Andrea Calderwood (Slate Films) before finally putting this project into production in 2006.

Adapted by Peter Morgan and Jeremy Brock from the award-winning novel by Giles Foden, it was considered courageous for being a fictional account of a well known contemporary figure, Idi Amin. Combining an uneasy mix of the real and the imaginary, the story told of the relationship between a young Scottish doctor and the notoriously volatile Ugandan dictator.

Following the enormous critical success of his earlier Film4 project *Touching the Void*, renowned documentary filmmaker Kevin Macdonald was chosen to direct the film as his first dramatic feature. Film4 put up half the budget, with DNA/Fox providing the other half.

The film featured Forest Whittaker and *Shameless* star James McAvoy in the lead roles, with Simon McBurney and Gillian Anderson supporting.

The Last King of Scotland proved to be a critical and commercial hit in the UK and around the world. It won the Best British Film award at the BAFTAs, and Forest Whittaker won the Best Actor Award at the Oscars. The film has since taken over \$18 million at the US box office and a further \$25 million outside the US.

It established Kevin Macdonald as a major British feature filmmaking talent, setting new standards for UK filmmaking.

Film4: Innovative new approaches

WARP X

As the UK's first digital low-budget feature film studio, Warp X epitomizes Channel 4 and Film4's long-term commitment to new talent and to the development of films that reflect and comment on life in contemporary Britain. It provides the only fully integrated one-stop studio for new filmmakers, offering a mentored and fully-financed development, production and distribution package. Based in Sheffield it is also unique in being the only significant feature film player established in the English regions.

Warp X was designed to create a more structured and sustainable way to apply a formula that had been pursued with great success on two recent low-budget feature films, Shane Meadows' *Dead Man's Shoes* and Miranda July's *Me & You & Everyone We Know*. By providing systematic end-to-end support for the development and production process, Warp X aims to produce distinctive features from first-time writers and directors – whose initial works would typically be confined to the arthouse circuit – that have the ambition to make a larger impact with UK audiences.

Jointly funded by Film4 and the UK Film Council with £3 million over three years, a competitive bidding process to run the project was won by Warp Films (the producers of *Dead Man's Shoes*) in partnership with two regional screen agencies, Screen Yorkshire and East Midlands Media, and distributor Optimum Releasing.

Its first two productions, *A Complete History of My Sexual Failures* and *Donkey Punch* both premiered to great acclaim at the Sundance festival in January 2008, and will be released in the UK in the summer.

MYMOVIEMASHUP

A partnership between Film4, Vertigo and MySpace, MyMovieMashUp is a unique attempt to write, develop and produce a feature film by inviting members of the public to work online with industry professionals. This ambitious project represents the next step in Channel 4's engagement with online communities, following the innovative process used to launch E4 teen drama *Skins* on MySpace.

From a shortlist of script ideas, participants selected *Faintheart*, a romantic comedy set in the world of Viking battle re-enactments, from first-time director Vito Rocco.

The script was road-tested and substantially re-written online. Casting was also done via the internet, matching established lead performers – Eddy Marsan, Jessica Hynde and Ewen Bremner – with new talent that emerged from online auditions.

The film was shot in the summer of 2007, with further user collaboration contributing to the post-production process. Online users went on to cut trailers for the film, and vote on the best one to use. Bands have been auditioning online to contribute to the soundtrack. And the ambitious distribution plan involves an unorthodox "love map", in which towns are invited to vote for early-date release, with premiers being staged in the places that produced the biggest vote. This will be complemented by online distribution through Vertigo, MySpace and Channel 4's VoD services.

The project has attracted huge press attention and captured the imagination of an internet community which is not necessarily drawn to British films, perhaps pointing to new ways of re-energising British film and reconnecting British filmmakers with their public.

Supporting creativity in TV and beyond

CASTLEFORD PROJECT

Three years ago, Channel 4 decided to extend the well-established makeover format – typically confined to people’s front rooms or back gardens – to cover an entire town. The result has been a regeneration partnership whose impact has gone far beyond television.

The *Castleford Project* has drawn the local community and local, regional and national agencies into a hugely imaginative and inspirational regeneration scheme to improve the physical environment and public spaces of a former West Yorkshire mining town.

What has emerged is a model of high-quality planning and local participation. While its investment was modest compared to some of the local partners, Channel 4 was the catalyst for the project, providing crucial impetus from the outset by challenging and engaging the local community, and by guaranteeing a major peak-time commission documenting the project which can be seen on Channel 4 later this year.

To date, Castleford has attracted more than £11 million from the City of Wakefield, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, English Partnerships, Yorkshire Forward, Groundwork UK and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

Like many other Channel 4 initiatives, the *Castleford Project* does more than reflect the changing face of Britain. It helps to shape it, to question it and to stimulate fresh perspectives and new possibilities.

The television series is being produced by Talkback Thames.

CREATIVE CITIES INITIATIVE: BRISTOL

Typical of Channel 4’s approach to supporting creative businesses around the UK is the story of production in the South-West of England. Bristol has long been a centre of high quality factual programming and a leading animation centre, but until a few years ago it lacked a broader production base.

In partnership with Bristol City Council, the Regional Development Agency and SouthWest Screen, Channel 4 created 4SouthWest, an initiative to build and sustain small production companies and help extend their ambitions. Since 2004 As a result, 40 small production companies have benefited directly from financial support since 2004.

Testimony Films was one of several companies funded to employ a development producer and researcher for eighteen months. It also benefited from training provided by Channel 4’s Research Centre and direct access to Channel 4 commissioners. According to Testimony MD Steve Humphries, this transformed the company’s future: *“Developing new ideas and selling them is now built into the fabric of our company”*.

Channel 4 also commissioned a pilot from Endemol to be based in a purpose-built studio in Bristol. Although the planned project was unsuccessful, the studio became the base for *Deal or No Deal*. More recently, by locating the highly successful series *Skins* in the region, Channel 4 has helped stimulate growth in drama production.

This investment benefits the whole industry, not only Channel 4. Steve Humphries says: *“There is no obligation to make programmes just for Channel 4. They are trying to boost everyone – at no other broadcaster do you feel as valued as a small indie”*.

Public service content on digital channels

SKINS

Skins was precisely the type of young exciting cutting-edge drama E4 had been looking for. It was a highly experimental project – in terms both of its subject matter and the production process – that went on to become one of E4’s biggest ever successes.

The genesis for the series was contained in a mission statement composed by writer Bryan Elsley’s son Jamie Brittain. Together they planned for *Skins* to have stories with truth, heart and humour – stories about teenagers for teenagers, portraying their joy and pain, without sensationalism.

New young writers, actors and directors were chosen who really understood their subjects and the stories they were telling. Bryan and Jamie led the writing team, with weekly writing workshops for all the writers to compare scripts, contribute to each other’s work, and learn from each other along the way. *Skins* resonated strongly with its teenage audience by combining believability with entertainment. The strength of its storytelling gave it a broader reach, with older audiences also engaging with the characters’ stories.

The first episode of *Skins* was E4’s best-performing commissioned programme ever. Including repeats on E4 and Channel 4, it attracted 4.7 million viewers. Elsley says: “*Channel 4 got behind an idea and stayed behind it – not mitigating it or making it safe, palatable or appeal to everybody. I could make Skins what I wanted it to be. For that you need a Commissioning Editor with courage*”. Brittain was also pleased by Channel 4’s way of working: “*They’ve been incredibly supportive*”.

Skins is made by Company Pictures

THE BRITISH CONNECTION

Weekly strand The British Connection took over the entire Film4 schedule for two weeks in March 2008, with every film shown on the channel being of British origin.

The films highlighted the depth and range of Film4’s commitment to homegrown cinema. The afternoon slots featured classic cinema of the past, with works from luminaries such as Powell and Pressburger (*A Matter of Life and Death* and *Black Narcissus*) and David Lean (*Brief Encounter*), along with groundbreaking films such as *Victim*.

Contemporary favourites like *Notting Hill* and *The Full Monty* played in peak, along with acclaimed films from Shane Meadows (*Dead Man’s Shoes*), Mike Leigh (*Vera Drake*), Annie Griffin (*Festival*) and Jonathan Glazer (*Sexy Beast*). The season gave audiences a rare chance to see *Resurrected*, director Paul Greengrass’s first feature, and Alan Clarke’s last production, *The Firm*.

The British Connection season was timed to celebrate the theatrical release of a wave of major indigenous films, including Film4 productions *Happy-Go-Lucky* (by Mike Leigh) and *In Bruges* (the debut feature from director Martin McDonagh), along with *Doomsday* (Neil Marshall’s follow-up to *The Descent*) and *The Other Boleyn Girl* (director Justin Chadwick’s first film).

The season reinforced Film4’s reputation for making and showing films, promoting the new theatrical releases with features, exclusive clips and interviews with key talent, and with bespoke trails and special stings before each film.

GHOSTS

A drama-documentary by Nick Broomfield about slave labour in modern-day Britain, *Ghosts* was inspired by the 2004 Morecambe Bay disaster in which 23 Chinese cockle pickers drowned. It tells the story of Ai Qin, a single mother from China's Fujian province, who pays to be smuggled into Britain in search of work to sustain her family back home. Once here, she is sucked into the cycle of exploitation in which 3 million migrant workers are caught. To pay off debts, she resorts to nighttime cockle-picking and is caught up in the tragedy.

Broomfield stepped aside from his hugely successful career as a documentary-maker to make this, his first drama feature for more than fifteen years. Never one to make life easy for himself, he set out to make *Ghosts* with a cast of largely non-English speaking non-professional actors, a very modest budget and a script which pointed a finger very directly and forcefully at the interests of big business.

The film opened in 2006 at the San Sebastian Film Festival and later played at the London Film Festival and Sundance to widespread acclaim. One critic described it as "unflinching, uncomfortable and unanswerable". A campaign fund mounted on the back of the film to help pay off migrant workers' debts has so far raised £60,000. *Ghosts* was fully funded by More4, and epitomises Channel 4's commitment to use drama as a means of exploring issues more usually dealt with by the documentary format. Who better to push that approach forward than one of Britain's leading documentary makers?

DEATH OF A PRESIDENT

Interweaving actual news footage with dramatic narrative, *Death of a President* offered a fictional but entirely plausible scenario of the assassination of President George W Bush. Produced in documentary style by Gabriel Range and Simon Finch, the film explored the way in which the hysteria triggered by a national crisis could impede justice, undermine common sense and precipitate even greater danger.

Opening at the 2006 Toronto Film Festival, the film raised a storm of protest. It was boycotted by all the big US TV networks. Film distributors and cinema chains denounced it. The White House remained silent but former President George H.W. Bush called it "despicable", and Hillary Clinton "sick". British reaction was rather different, one critic calling it "one of the best programmes of the year".

The extent of the press coverage led to a large audience for its premiere on More4 and subsequent screening on Channel 4 and, despite its hostile reception in the United States, the film won the International Critics Prize at Toronto and an International Emmy in 2007.

Range and Finch had already made several successful "future documentaries" for the BBC, when Channel 4's drama team and More4 commissioned *Death of a President*. The programme helped establish More4, then in its inaugural year, as a channel from which viewers could expect intelligent, entertaining, thought-provoking television at its best.

Public service content in digital media

PICTURE THIS

channel4.com/picturethis

A highly integrated cross-platform commission helping people improve their photography, *Picture This* was built around a three-part TV arts series, in which six highly talented emerging photographers undertook a series of assignments assessed by expert judges. The *Picture This*

website enabled the online audience to simultaneously undertake the photographic challenges on TV. The best of the online submissions featured in the television shows each week.

The hugely successful website was billed as “*a friendly place to improve your photography*”, generating a good-natured, mutually-supportive online community, undertaking weekly communal challenges and helping one another develop their technical and creative photographic skills. Some 12% of users’ web sessions were over 30 minutes in length, and 5% were over an hour long – high levels of engagement in a medium in which it is typically a struggle to command five minutes’ attention.

Produced in collaboration with Flickr, the world’s leading photo-sharing site, the website benefited from a process known as user-centred design, which builds out from users’ needs and desires. The TV show was inspired by the Flickr “tag cloud”, the visual indicator of what is being photographed the most at any given time.

The judges and mentors from the TV show engaged online by commenting on photos uploaded by the community. Users had the satisfaction of having their submissions reviewed by the likes of world famous Magnum photographer Martin Parr.

The TV show was produced by Renegade Pictures, the interactive side by Preloaded, the two indies working in close collaboration after being brought together by Channel 4.

EMPIRE’S CHILDREN ONLINE

channel4.com/empire

Channel 4’s six-part history documentary series *Empire’s Children* told the story of the end of the British Empire through the family histories of a variety of well-known personalities. Ranging from Diana Rigg to Shobna Gulati, they represented both the colonisers and the colonised. Like a growing proportion of Channel 4 projects, the television series was the springboard for a substantial ongoing interactive project.

Empires Children Interactive enables users to tell their family’s Empire stories online, with a great deal of attention paid to making it as easy as possible for inexperienced web users. In addition the site provides information about records and archives for people researching this part of their family history, plus a wealth of video clips.

By engaging those who have a story to tell, the site will itself prove a valuable resource for the future, especially as the generation with personal memories of colonial life passes away.

Channel 4 brokered a relationship between Wall to Wall TV and Illumina Digital to create the cross-platform offering, and worked with the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol during the course of the project.

Empire’s Children Interactive won the 2007 London Design Festival award for Best Community Website and the People’s Choice “winner of winners” Award.

SKINS ONLINE

e4.com/skins & myspace.com/e4skins

Finely-tuned online engagement created huge interest in *Skins* before it even aired on TV. MySpace character profiles allowed its increasingly marketing-savvy target audience to discover the programme themselves, and MySpace friends had the chance to appear in TV trailers or attend the launch party. They could also contribute creatively, with competitions to

redesign the *Skins* online logo, submit music, make short films about the characters, and design cast outfits for a photoshoot. Before the first episode had aired, *Skins* had 20,000 friends on MySpace, 10,000 of whom entered the launch party competition. Partly through word-of-mouth generated online, *Skins* launched with almost 2 million viewers, the highest ever audience for a new multichannel drama series amongst 16-34s.

Skins continues to engage fans online: competition winners appeared in a rave scene at the close of Series 1, which became a 10-minute online/E4 special. People could also design projections, provide music, and document the event through blogs and Flickr photosharing. January 2008 saw Series 2 launch with a 20% increase in the 16-34 audience. Launch events around the country included parties featuring new and big-name bands. The first episode premiered on E4.com, and was viewed over 60,000 times. E4.com continues to feature exclusive web episodes following each TV episode, and Premiere Party Interviews. *The Skins Podcast* recently went to number one on the iTunes chart.

As well as having around 130,000 MySpace friends, possibly the largest of its kind for a TV series worldwide, *Skins* also has expanded into Bebo (around 11,000 friends) and Facebook (around 5,000).

BREAKING THE NEWS

channel4.com/breakingthenews

"This resource does far more than it says on the tin. Its use extends way beyond media studies, for which it is primarily intended. It's an online resource which stimulates, informs and challenges viewers' engagement with television as a whole [...] It's Channel 4 at its best", Judge and Jury comments at 2006 RTS Education Awards.

Breaking the News is the result of a partnership between Channel 4, ITN and Illumina Digital. It aims to encourage and stimulate young people's media literacy, specifically in relation to television news. The project demonstrates how media literacy can be realised as a lively, enjoyable and illuminating hands-on experience. It kicked off with a *Breaking the News* day, in which a group of 14-19 year-old schoolchildren and college students worked in parallel with the *Channel 4 News* production team to produce their own bulletin, which was promoted on that evening's edition of *Channel 4 News* and streamed online.

The *Breaking The News* website makes available the information and tools behind that News Day, including cutting-edge online video editing software designed to be highly accessible and easy-to-use. Users can edit regularly refreshed ITN rushes to cut their own bulletins, helping them understand the mechanics of broadcast news. The website enables institutions across the country to run their own news simulations, while footage of the original News Day is used in Continuing Professional Development programmes for teachers, the result of a co-production with Teachers' TV.

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| Channel 4 is braver than any other broadcaster |
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DISPATCHES: UNDERCOVER MOSQUE

High-quality investigative journalism plays a vital role and serves an important public interest by holding public institutions to account and exposing hypocrisy, wrongdoing and injustice.

Dispatches: Undercover Mosque used secret filming and journalistic investigation to expose extreme views being preached in mainstream UK mosques and Islamic organisations. The documentary necessarily contained offensive comments, including remarks denigrating

Christians, Jews, women and gay people, and criticising the hypocrisy of the supposedly moderate organisations where the preachers were covertly filmed.

Undercover Mosque was made by Hardcash, a small independent production company using a producer-director, an undercover reporter and an executive producer. They worked closely with Channel 4's News & Current Affairs and Legal & Compliance teams.

The high risk undercover filming and painstaking journalistic investigation involved sifting hundreds of hours of material, and numerous lengthy meetings to discuss the production, the evidence and the programme. Numerous letters offering a right to reply were sent to individuals and organisations featured to ensure fair representation.

The programme was around 12 months in the making – and over the 12 months following its broadcast Channel 4 was still defending it. Presenting offensive views, albeit within context and as part of an investigation of matters very much in the public interest, inevitably attracted complaints that it should not have been shown, and even that it was Islamophobic.

Immediately prior to broadcast, the team had to deal with threats of legal action from two of London's top libel law firms on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the London Central Mosque. As the first part of the programme was being broadcast, final edits were still being made to the second part.

After broadcast, Channel 4 faced an application for journalistic material under a production order from West Midlands Police, investigating alleged offences by the speakers secretly filmed. After the order was granted, the focus of the police investigation eventually turned to the production team and broadcaster themselves.

Concluding that no prosecutions could be successfully brought, the West Midlands Police and CPS issued a joint statement to the press alleging that an "intensity of editing" had distorted the speakers' words, and that they had been misrepresented in the programme. When the West Midlands Police lodged a formal complaint with Ofcom, the *Undercover Mosque* team found themselves at the centre of a high profile "TV fakery" furore.

Channel 4 staunchly defended the programme and its makers against these allegations from the police; over 300 complaints from members of the public; and complaints of unfairness and breach of privacy from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the London Central Mosque.

Ofcom dismissed all these complaints and found that Channel 4 was not in breach of the Broadcasting Code in any respect. Ofcom Chief Executive Ed Richards said: "*Ofcom's investigation found that Dispatches had uncovered matters of clear public interest and had handled the material responsibly, finding no evidence that Channel 4 had misled its audience.*"

He added: "*It is essential that Channel 4 continues to produce challenging programmes about controversial issues which are responsibly handled. In this case the Dispatches team did not shy away from a difficult subject and upheld British broadcasting's strong tradition of investigative journalism.*"

Growing our presence on digital platforms

4oD

4oD launched in autumn 2006 as the first full video-on-demand service offered by any major broadcaster, available online and through Virgin Media, BT Vision and Tiscali. By February

2008, 4oD had attracted over three million users across all platforms, who between them watched 100 million hours of catch-up and archive programmes.

4oD is central to Channel 4's future plans, extending viewer choice in an easily accessible way. The user-friendly user interface offers multiple ways to search for programmes, including an easily-navigable Channel 4 schedule.

The pioneering service demonstrates Channel 4's innovative approach to delivering its services. Its simplicity masks complex behind-the-scenes operations needed to launch and develop the service, including negotiating rights deals with over 100 independent producers and all major US studios prior to launch.

4oD has developed rapidly over the last 18 months. It initially offered a 30-day catch-up service and hundreds of hours of archive on a downloadable, pay-per-view basis. In March 2007, seven-day catch-up content was offered on an ad-funded basis and included streaming for viewers with high-speed connections. This then became a 30-day catch up service in September 2007, and Channel 4 has subsequently become the first broadcaster in the world to make its entire commissioned schedule available on demand via a comprehensive catch-up and vast archive service, all free to the consumer. 4oD also includes content from other channels including National Geographic, FX and Discovery.

Over the next year, 4oD will become part of the new joint venture between BBC Worldwide, ITV and Channel 4, offering an integrated VOD service.

4 RADIO

Launched in June 2006, Channel4radio.com showcases Channel 4's future vision for radio, offering challenging and distinctive radio programmes. Having won a national DAB multiplex licence, Channel 4 Radio Limited intends to roll out new 4-branded services over the next two years.

So far, 28 different production companies have delivered 19,000 minutes of bespoke programming on Channel4radio.com, across music, news, comedy, sport, entertainment, arts and documentary genres. 4Radio podcasts have proved popular with new radio audiences – some have topped the iTunes UK download charts, and together they have generated several million downloads.

Channel 4 Radio's commissioning team aims to push the boundaries of current UK radio content, prioritising underserved audiences and new talent. An example of the distinctive public service values Channel 4 plans to bring to radio is *My Streets*, an alternative travel guide from young British people. In one episode, *A Rudeboy's Guide to Peckham*, Shamblez, a twenty year old DJ, takes the listener around the tough estates, parks and radio stations of his South London community. His gangland past and gun crime issues are interlaced with colourful descriptions of the area, observations about regeneration, and life in the area after the death of Damilola Taylor.

The show won both a Sony Radio Award for Internet Programming and the European Radio Award for best original content podcast, recognition of Channel 4's commitment to excellence in radio.

My Streets is produced by All Out Productions.

Growing our presence on digital platforms

THE CHANNEL 4 BRITISH DOCUMENTARY FILM FOUNDATION

Building on its historic commitment to the documentary form, Channel 4 established the Channel 4 British Documentary Foundation three years ago as an independent non-profit organisation dedicated to safeguarding an ambitious creative future for British documentary. The Foundation has established itself as a life-line for independent British film-makers with ideas for short and feature length documentaries. Its production fund of £500,000 a year has so far leveraged more than £1 million of additional funds from other sources.

Its awards tally so far is considerable, including two Grierson Trust Awards, a BIFA for *Black Gold*, and the Edinburgh Film Festival Audience Award and IDFA Audience Award for *We Are Together*.

The Foundation also established the BRITDOC summer festival. This three-day gathering of international documentary funders, producers and enthusiasts culminates in a pitch forum, which last year raised more than £750,000 in co-production finance for British documentaries. The Independent described BRITDOC as a place “*where documentary films are born, bringing together the most diverse and influential group of filmmakers and financiers in the world.*”

With clear evidence that the Foundation is achieving all that was hoped of it, Channel 4 has now increased its financial support and extended it for a further three years.

The Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation forms part of Channel 4’s broader commitment to documentary filmmaking and to supporting emerging talent. Other components include Channel 4’s pioneering broadband documentary channel FourDocs, and dedicated slots in the schedule for documentaries on Channel 4 and More4.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

Award-winning director Molly Dineen set out to make a film about fox-hunting and the impact of its banning by Act of Parliament. As she travelled the country she came to realise that the public furore over fox hunting concealed many more profound changes to rural life in Britain.

Unthinking legislation, insensitive development and the ruthlessness of the food industry have all had dire consequences for the landscape, lifestyle and livestock of which most townies claim to be so fond.

“The more I followed the farmers, the more I realised I didn’t know about the harsh realities of rural living – not to mention the hypocritical way that most people, including myself, see the countryside as a picture-perfect postcard that we can dip in and out of without concerning ourselves with its realities.” Filming for three years, often alone, she assembled her material into a bleak and devastating portrait of rural Britain today.

The film generated widespread comment in the press and elsewhere. It was hailed as “brilliant”, “devastating”, “passionate”, “thoughtful”, “brutal” and “lyrical”. One newspaper columnist said it would change her life: *“The Lie of the Land is a capital-I, capital-F Important Film...It has made me feel sad, angry, guilty, and as a result not merely made me vow to change the way I live my life, but actually do it.”*

Such is still the unique power of network television.

LOST FOR WORDS

Lost for Words was a series of programmes highlighting the issue of childhood illiteracy. Three-part documentary series *Last Chance Kids* followed the experiences of Dagenham's Monteagle Primary School, which introduced a rigorous synthetic phonics scheme, used to teach every child that required it for an hour a day until they could read. The premise of the series was that if one ordinary primary school could turn its poor readers around so successfully, any other school, or any child, should be able to do the same.

A special edition of *Richard & Judy's Children's Book Club* called for the introduction of a new system of children's reading bands - Early, Developing, Confident and Fluent. Producer Amanda Ross led a delegation of writers to 10 Downing Street to present 545 letters of support from prominent authors including Nick Hornby, Jacqueline Wilson, Andy McNab, Susan Hill, Tony Hawks, Andrew Motion, Howard Jacobson, Sophie Kinsella, Ian Rankin, Joanna Trollope and Tony Parsons. Talks with the Government followed, along with a pledge from WH Smith to promote the reading bands, and the establishment of a publishing industry working group committed to advancing "band"-based books.

Amanda Ross says: '*Total literacy in our schools is achievable – Monteagle went a long way to proving that. There are towns in India that have achieved 100% literacy, we shouldn't settle for less. Children are disenfranchised from the world if they can't read – it should be the foundation of education.*'

Last Chance Kids was produced by Diverse and *Richard and Judy's Children's Book Club* by Cactus.

THE BIG FOOD FIGHT

The Big Food Fight united Channel 4's three "titans of cuisine" – Gordon Ramsay, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver – in a two-week season that challenged viewers to think before they eat. The season highlighted the realities of poultry production, showing the poor conditions of intensively-farmed chickens, with the aim of making people consider the benefits of free-range chickens. Other programmes revealed the major risk factors associated with diets high in fat, sugar and salt.

Despite conveying serious messages, often with graphic and gruesome imagery, the programmes succeeded in engaging large numbers of people. Four million watched *Hugh's Chicken Run*; an average of 4.3 million watched *Jamie's Fowl Dinners*, and *Dispatches: The Truth About Your Food* recorded the strand's second highest rating since 2004. The series finale, Gordon Ramsay's live one-hour *Cook-along* attracted 4.7million viewers.

The programmes had an immediate tangible impact, both on public perceptions and the behavior of supermarkets. Independent research by Ipsos Mori found that 72% of all people asked thought the season was the right thing for Channel 4 to do. 35% claimed they would think more about their food, and 32% claimed they would change their buying behaviour. Sainsbury's, the Co-op and Morrisons announced they would no longer sell eggs from caged birds and all products containing egg would be sourced from free-range hens – satisfying evidence of the power of public service television.

The series demonstrated a key part of Channel 4's role: to challenge audiences and make them feel differently about the world.

New approaches to public service genres

AMIR KHAN'S ANGRY YOUNG MEN

Champion boxer Amir Khan's three-part series explored his religious faith and his belief that the discipline and focus which it had brought to his life could help turn other people, including disaffected young people, into model citizens.

Filmed in Amir's hometown of Bolton, the series explored the many influences that he felt had shaped his character and personality; his British, Pakistani and Muslim roots and his connections with local boxing clubs and the town's Premier League football club. With interviews filmed in local mosques and churches, he argued that his sense of the connection between his own faith and that of others was a further important strand in his own cultural heritage.

Having turned down offers from other broadcasters, Amir Khan agreed to work with Channel 4 and production company Remedy Productions because of a connection between his management and Channel 4's commissioning editor for religion; practical proof of the need to have commissioners and creative staff who adequately represent the UK's religious, cultural and regional diversity.

After the series, Amir's personal website was inundated with emails of appreciation, and the young men who participated in a short-term boot-camp as part of the series were positive about the experience. *Amir Khan's Angry Young Men* was a powerful exercise in attempting to see if the power of religion in action can draw an audience to a difficult subject area.

SECRET MILLIONAIRE

Secret Millionaire followed a series of benefactors leaving their normal life to go undercover in a new neighbourhood, exploring the community's social issues and struggles. Secretly assessing the people and organisations that they met, the benefactors revealed their identity to the people they had chosen to help after 10 days.

Developed by RDF Television, *Secret Millionaire* was attractive to Channel 4 because of its 'Prince and the Pauper' aspect. Although ethically it was close to the bone, with potential risks involved, Channel 4 nonetheless decided to back the project. Everything was done to make the programme as observational as possible, the imperative being to protect everyone's dignity.

This approach worked well, with viewers appreciating the pay-off at the end of each programme. As the millionaires revealed their offers of support, TV cameras captured the emotionally charged moment when good people working in difficult circumstances were given an unexpected surprise. The series succeeded in confronting issues such as social housing, immigration, single parenthood and urban plight in a sensitive manner. Stereotypes were challenged, for example when a previously anti-immigration millionaire ended up choosing to give his money to an asylum centre.

Secret Millionaire was Channel 4's most successful new 9pm series in 2006. Its second series, in 2007, averaged 3.3 million viewers. The Mail on Sunday described the programme as "the heart-warming series that's reality TV at its best".

It was awarded the Best Reality Show Award at the Rose D'Or Awards in 2007.

STRENGTHENING DIVERSITY

NEW SHOOTS/ THE SHOOTING PARTY

As part of its commitment to diversity, Channel 4 has a proud history of reflecting disability on screen – featuring disabled people and disability issues in programmes across the schedule – as well as supporting disabled programme-makers behind the camera. *New Shoots* gave 12 inexperienced directors, all of them with a disability, the opportunity to make a half-hour documentary, working with an experienced production team from Maverick/Resource Base in Birmingham. The resulting eclectic mix of films provided unexpected and entertaining perspectives on everything from greyhound racing to professional quizzers.

The same production team is now producing *The Shooting Party*, which gives nine disabled people the chance to make short films on any theme or subject of their choice. They will also help two other members of the group to make their films by acting as runners, researchers, casting producers or location managers on their productions. The 12-episode series will chart the highs and lows of the filmmakers' experiences, culminating in a red carpet screening event with prizes for Best Film, Best Team Player and Most Promising New Director.

New Shoots and *The Shooting Party* are not "filmmaking for therapy": these films will be the fledgling directors' calling cards on the next step in their careers. Those who succeed will go on to add to the diversity of voices and viewpoints on which Channel 4 prides itself.

ROBERT BECKFORD

Robert Beckford had approached numerous broadcasters without success. Channel 4's religious programming team was the first to give him a break with *God is Black*, a two-part series that looked at the rise of African Christianity and its impact on the liberal western Church.

As a theologian and an expert on black Churches, Robert was not only a natural for the project but probably the only person who could fully grasp the story's significance. In *The Guardian*, Mark Lawson called him the "*future of religious broadcasting*". Not bad for someone who was overlooked for many years before Channel 4 took the risk of putting him on in prime time...

Since then, Robert has grown as a presenter: his touching film on the origins of Gospel music, his in-depth exploration of the story of Christ; and his passionate documentary on the potential of free trade production in Africa have cemented his place in the heart of the schedule.

Channel 4 has now given Robert the chance to do what any theologian would dream about – the opportunity to bring theology to a mass audience. His two-hour Christmas Day specials *Who wrote the Bible*, *The Secret Family of Jesus* and *The Hidden Story of Jesus* built on the public's appetite for Da Vinci Code-type conspiracies, but with a real world theological and historical analysis.